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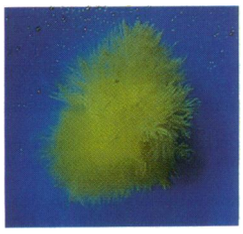
IMAGES IN CARDIOLOGY

Papillary fibroelastoma of the mitral valve: a rare cause of transient neurological deficits



Surgically excised papillary fibroelastoma.

Papillary fibroelastomas are rare benign tumours of the endocardium that most commonly are found on the aortic or mitral valve.[1] They are a few millimetres to some centimetres in diameter and look like sea anemones (fig). Most are found coincidentally at necropsy but a few cause patients to present with systemic emboli derived from detached fronds of tumour or from thrombi developing between the fronds.

This specimen (2·3 cm in diameter) was removed from the mitral sub-valve apparatus of a man of 59 with a history of two transient cerebral ischaemic attacks. The mitral valve was replaced. Routine echocardiography showed an intracavity mass within the left ventricle. Since the operation a year ago he has had no further cerebral ischaemic attacks.

Papillary fibroelastomas are different from myxomas. Not every intracavitary mass is a myxoma. If a fibroelastoma is recognised it can simply be peeled away from the underlying tissue and the valve can be preserved.

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